



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. AB 531 (Sub-No 3X)]

Pioneer Valley Railroad Company, Inc.—Abandonment Exemption—in Hampshire County, Mass.

Pioneer Valley Railroad Company, Inc. (PVRR), has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR part 1152 subpart F—Exempt Abandonments to abandon approximately 4.25 miles of rail line from the northern terminus at Coleman Road (approximate milepost 69.70 in PVRR’s original track chart) to the southern terminus at Brickyard Road, near its intersection with Valley Road (approximate milepost 73.95 in PVRR’s original track chart), in the Town of Southampton, Hampshire County, Mass. (the Line). The Line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Code 01073.

PVRR has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the Line for over two years; (2) there is no overhead traffic on the Line; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the Line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the Line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court, or has been decided in favor of a complainant within the two-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7(b) and 1105.8(c) (notice of environmental and historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to government agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under Oregon Short Line Railroad—Abandonment Portion Goshen Branch Between Firth & Ammon, in Bingham & Bonneville Counties, Idaho, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects

affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed.

Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received,¹ this exemption will be effective on December 17, 2022, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues must be filed by November 25, 2022.² Formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2) and interim trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by November 28, 2022.³ Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by December 7, 2022.

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. AB 531 (Sub-No. 3X), must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board either via e-filing on the Board's website or in writing addressed to 395 E Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on PVRR's representative, Michael S. Schneider, Doherty, Wallace, Pillsbury, & Murphy, P.C., One Monarch Place, 1414 Main Street, Floor 19, Springfield, MA 01144.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

¹ Persons interested in submitting an OFA must first file a formal expression of intent to file an offer, indicating the type of financial assistance they wish to provide (i.e., subsidy or purchase) and demonstrating that they are preliminarily financially responsible. See 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2)(i).

² The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See Exemption of Out-of-Serv. Rail Lines, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

³ Filing fees for OFAs and trail use requests can be found at 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25) and (27), respectively.

PVRR has filed a combined environmental and historic report that addresses the potential effects, if any, of the abandonment on the environment and historic resources. OEA will issue a Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) by November 22, 2022. The Draft EA will be available to interested persons on the Board's website, by writing to OEA, or by calling OEA at (202) 245-0294. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Comments on environmental or historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the Draft EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), PVRR shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the Line. If consummation has not been effected by PVRR's filing of a notice of consummation by November 17, 2023, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available at www.stb.gov.

Decided: November 14, 2022.

By the Board, Mai T. Dinh, Director, Office of Proceedings.

Brendetta Jones,

Clearance Clerk.

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